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CHAPTER IV

THE COMMUNITY: VILLAGE AND TOWN

THE description of 'areas of common life' must start with the description of the external arrangement, that is, forms of settlement. The Nupe live in large villages or towns. They have only one word for both, *eži*, thus defining the essentially identical nature of the two forms of settlement. There exists another Nupe word, *tunga* or *kangi*, which is applied to very small settlements. But this name refers not so much to the size as to the different sociological nature of the settlement; for the *tunga*, unlike the *eži*, does not represent an independent local unit but a 'daughter-settlement', a 'colony' of a village or town.

The size of the *eži* varies considerably. Nupe Emirate counts three villages with a population of over or near a thousand: Doko with 800 inhabitants; Mokwa with 2,000; and Kutigi with 3,000. But there exist also smaller 'towns', villages the population of which had been reduced by emigration and which may be, in size, hardly bigger than a large *tunga*. The local arrangement of the Nupe village, large or small, is nearly always the same: clusters of compounds scattered comfortably over an area, each 'cluster' consisting of a number of walled compounds, 'houses' in native terminology, and forming what the Nupe call an *efu*, or ward. These village wards are separated by stretches of open land, spacious cultivated fields, studded with clumps of trees. More rarely the *efu* stand close together and are separated only by narrow thoroughfares between the walls of neighbouring compounds. This latter arrangement is typical of many riverside villages where, in narrow space, house presses upon house and compound upon compound. Each *efu* has its own name, derived either from a topographical peculiarity, e.g. Takogi, meaning 'the one below', or Kpacinefu, 'the river bank *efu*', or from a sociological feature, namely, the rank or profession of the people living in the *efu*, e.g. *efu* Žitsu, '*efu* of the chief', or *efu* Tswata, '*efu* of the blacksmiths', and so forth; or, finally, the name of the *efu* may refer to the origin of its inhabitants, betraying them as immigrants from another village or tribe, e.g. Yafu (abbr. for Eyagi-fu), 'Yoruba *efu*', or *efu* Daži, '*efu* of (the people of) Daži'.

The Nupe *eži* with its scattered *efu* clusters is encircled by a large town wall, or more correctly, used to be encircled by a town wall. It exists no longer, but its ruins can still be seen in many places, and all the people insist that formerly all 'towns' were protected by such walls. These crumbled ruins of the old town wall provide us with a piece of important historical evidence, which tells us, I think, why the Nupe have chosen just this type of settlement, in large populous 'towns', and not, for example, settlement in loosely linked, scattered homesteads; it allows us to grasp at least one of the motives behind this social development: the dangers of war.[1] Large villages represent in a country of

[1] The other motive is economic and is entailed in the organization of the Nupe system of production and exchange. (See p. 366.)

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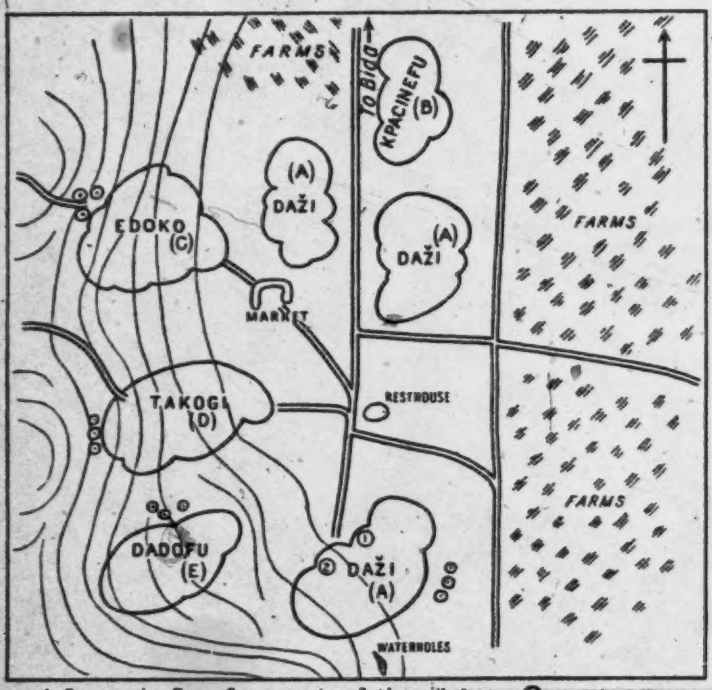
constant warfare the only safe method of settling. The small outlying settlements could quickly seek the protection of the walled town; a large concentrated population meant comparative security from raids, comparative safety in unsafe times. We have more historical data to support

SKETCH MAP OF DOKO



A-E are the five *efu* or wards of the village. ⊙...roast ovens.
①...house of chief (*Etsu Dožī*). ②...house of village priest (*Žigi*).

this interpretation. One or two Nupe villages have sprung from the amalgamation of small groups, and in one significant case this fusion of component groups into a single large 'town' can definitely be traced to the time of the Fulani wars. What is to-day the village of Doko originated then out of the fusion of a small hill-side village, called Edokó, with a village situated originally about two miles away, in the plain, by the name of Daži. To escape from the Fulani raiders the people of Daži moved to Edokó, into the protection of the hill-side. The new twin-town was called Doko, with Edokó and Daži as two of the five *efu* which form the village to-day; and the chief, who comes from the stock of the Daži people, still takes the title *Etsu* Daži, king of Daži.[1] We possess also

[1] How far a development such as this, with a large village growing out of the fusion of two or more component groups, is typical of Nupe settlement in general

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negative evidence to show that with the pacification of the country the reverse process has set in: Jima, once a capital of Nupe kingdom, a huge town to judge from the ruins of its town walls, is reduced to-day to a tiny village; most of its people have moved outside, and the eight former town-wards, still known by their old typical *efu*-names, are to-day scattered outposts, village 'colonies'—*tunga*.

The origin of the *tunga* settlements of Jima represents an unusual development. Normally the *tunga* reflects the expansion rather than the breaking up of the 'mother-town'. But the term *tunga* is not unequivocal. It refers to three different types of settlement. The first, the release of small groups for the foundation of 'daughter-settlements', is a direct consequence of the concentration of a large population in a single town. A growing population in the village, the need of new land, may lead to small groups moving into the uninhabited bush, to occupy virgin land and to found new settlements. A small section of one family at first, a few young men with their wives and children, the *tunga* may grow to a small hamlet embracing two or three large family groups. Or immigrants from another part of the country may choose to settle on the land which belongs to a certain village, and under its political protection: this settlement, too, will then be called *tunga*. Finally, the big landlords of Bida have settled their slaves and dependants on the land all round the capital, in small hamlets, called again *tunga*. But these settlements are in a different category, they represent not colonies of villages or towns but private property, farm settlements of individual landlords. A *tunga* is thus easily identified, for it is always referred to as a *tunga*, a 'colony', *of* a certain village or, in the case of private settlements, *of* a certain landlord. *Tunga* settlements seldom grow beyond three family groups. Should the population expand further, the *tunga* would again release some of its members who would leave the old settlement and found a new colony near-by. But it seems to have happened very rarely that a *tunga* grew into a 'town' proper—Gbangba, a prosperous village north of Bida and to-day the seat of a District Head, is the only example I can quote. Gbangba, however, was not a village colony but a *tunga* founded by people from Bida. On the other hand, I have seen several cases of *tunga* settlements which have grown out of each other, dependencies of dependencies. The *tunga* is itself a much more mobile settlement than the village proper. A *tunga* is often abandoned, and the people move to a new place, if there have been two or three bad harvests, or repeated cases of illness.

We understand the mobility of the *tunga* when we realize that these small farm settlements, founded by younger branches of families, can have none of the spiritual bonds—religious and ancestral—that would tie the 'real' village more permanently to the locality.[1] The same factor

I will not examine here. I may say that I have found two other typical instances; one I have described in *Man*, 1938, 85. There may be many more, of which the traces have become much more obliterated.

[1] An exception is provided by certain cults which are linked with individual families and not with the village as such; a sacred shrine of this kind may thus be carried to a *tunga*. The *tunga* Shebe Woro, for example, harbours the sacred chain and the shrine of Tsoede—two paraphernalia of the *edudu gbeyi* cult.

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COMPOUNDS IN KUTIGI

JEBBA ISLAND

[facing p. 36]

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621 also explains why *tunga* settlements rarely (if ever) develop into real 'towns'. The factor of size and numbers, too, plays its part. In order to provide that self-contained social and political life that is typical of the Nupe 'town', and in order to afford its inhabitants the political security which is part of the *raison d'être* of that form of settlement, a much larger concentration of people is necessary than the village *tunga* is likely ever to achieve in a sparsely populated country with so low a birth-rate. But the attitude of the people is as important: they cannot conceive of a *tunga* becoming an *ezi*—a rival settlement to their mother-town. The village *tunga* has no social life of its own: it possesses no market, no independent political organization, often no age-grades of its own, and celebrates its feasts and ceremonies with the 'mother-town'. 'Towns', on the other hand, are independent, self-contained units, which have little in common with each other, and often know nothing of their next-door neighbours. To become a 'town' would thus mean for the *tunga* to deny the very essence of its social identity.

Every village then counts, 'owns' as the Nupe say, a certain number of colonies, which surround it in a radius of six to seven miles, right up to the point where the area of the next village begins. Kutigi, for example, possesses six *tunga* settlements founded between 1860 and 1910. Five were founded by people from the two largest *efu* of Kutigi, one by people from Etsú, a neighbouring 'town', who preferred to settle on the more open and fertile land of Kutigi. Doko, a much smaller village but situated in a more densely populated area, owns nine large *tunga* settlements and a number of smaller, secondary, dependencies. Two of the large *tunga* settlements were founded by people of the Cekpā sub-tribe who fled from their homes during the Yoruba wars and settled in more peaceful Beni country. The other seven are village colonies proper. Interspersed between these colonies of Doko are four 'private' *tunga* settlements, founded by slaves and other dependants of Bida landlords.

The following examples may illustrate the organization of two comparatively recently founded *tunga* settlements:

Zaboru, a *tunga* near Sakpe, consisting of two compounds, was founded by the man Zaboru, together with his elder brother, the present Village Head of Sakpe, about thirty years ago. The two men went out together to find a place with new farm-land, and built first temporary, later permanent huts. The elder brother returned to Sakpe after the death of their father to assume his position as the new head of the family. In his place a third, youngest, brother, who had just married, went out to the *tunga*, about ten years ago, where he is still living.

Shebe Woro, belonging to the 'town' Shebe and consisting of two compounds, was founded in 1933, when a certain Kolo left Shebe 'because the place was too full'. Together with some relations and two friends he occupied a new place, about three miles away, deeper in the bush, and founded there the settlement now called Shebe Woro, which means, New Shebe.

342 361 Let us now go inside a Nupe village. I have described already its typical lay-out—the scattered *efu* and the walled compounds or 'houses'

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which make up the *efu*. The Nupe house consists of a number of huts, mostly round, built of clay and thatched with grass, which are surrounded by a high mud wall. The wall opens upon the path or open space in front of the house in the *katamba*, a hut more spacious than the rest, with big doors which make the *katamba* a gateway or entrance-hall of the compound. Inside the house are smaller partitions and a number of smaller *katamba*, all invisible from outside. You only see the tops of the grass roofs protruding from behind the compound wall. Sometimes the house of a chief is built in a different, more imposing style with a large square or semicircular *katamba* which has a high gabled roof and windows let into the walls. Often huts or entrance-halls are decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. Some houses are more beautifully decorated than others—a sign both of difference in prosperity and in ambition or aesthetic leanings. There are the signs of occupational specialization: one or two blacksmiths' furnaces; a house decorated with crude plastics in relief of animals, or with a pair of horns surmounting the roof—a hunter's place; a platform of dyeing pits in one corner of the village, and perhaps the half-open sheds of the weavers. To-day one small mosque at least is found in every village of Nupe. Pagan sacred shrines or sacrifice places are mostly hidden inside the houses; only in the riverain villages did I find a sacred shrine placed in the open, in the middle of the village. The sacred groves where the annual sacrifices are performed are always some distance away from the village, hidden in the thin bush and brushwood which surround the village. Most villages are situated near a watercourse, be it only a little stream or brook. From here the women fetch the water, and here you may see them at all hours of the day washing dishes and calabashes or laundering their clothes. There are also wells in most of the villages, well-dug deep wells—the Nupe are excellent well-builders—with a strong timber framework and a solid, clean platform round the mouth of the shaft; standing on the platform, the women draw water in buckets or earthenware pots tied to long ropes of native hemp. The big, round roasting-ovens of clay which look like huge red eggs scattered on the outside of the village, and in the bigger places the square of open booths which forms the market, complete the picture of the Nupe village. Once or twice a week this square is overflowing with people, men and women of all ages: they buy and sell, they listen or dance to the music of drummers and flute-players, they have their heads shaved, they talk, chat, cry out their wares. They are a mixed crowd, and the nearer the village is to the main roads of the country, the more mixed it is: people from the village, peasants from the *tunga* near-by, traders from Bida, travellers and occasional visitors from places and countries far away.

The market gathering is not the village community. Yet the boundary of what we have called the area of common life is, of necessity, fluid. It is redrafted and reset with every new bond of contact and every new channel of communication. But we may say this: the village and its dependencies form the core of this area of common life. Between them takes place the intensive life of the community, of regular and habitual co-operation in all spheres of life. Within this area marriages are arranged,

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and peoples, its organization and its personalities, and above all its centre, the town of Bida. It seems characteristic that of the people of Sakpe, a backwood village in the centre of Bida Emirate, a large number have been to Bida, thirty miles away, but no one to Laboži, which is only ten miles away but lies in the opposite direction to Bida. There is only an apparent contradiction between this parochial outlook with respect to the community next door and this interest for the kingdom and its capital. It reflects the centripetal structure of the system of cultural 'co-ordination' which we identified with the Nupe state. But let us examine first, under the aspect of community and common life, its capital, Bida.

Bida as it exists to-day is a comparatively young town. It was founded by the first Fulani Emir of Nupe about 1860. The old Beni village of Bida which stood on its site, a small village of four *efu*, forms to-day the 'old city' of Bida, its innermost part, known as *ba nin*, the Inside. At the time of the British occupation Bida is reported to have had a population of 60,000. Later it dropped rapidly: the enormous households of the feudal lords dissolved, slaves and private armies disappeared, and absentee landlords moved out into the country to live on their land. The old trade-route to the south which ran through Bida was diverted by the British, who suggested the shorter route from Zaria to Lokoja.[1] Trade began to avoid the defeated, impoverished capital. Some ten years ago Bida counted over 30,000 inhabitants; the last figure, for 1934, is 23,286. But the cosmopolitan character of the population still betrays its character of a metropolis: all tribal sections of Nupe are represented, and besides almost every tribe of Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba, Yagba, Bunu, Kukuruku, Dakakari, Kamberi, Koro, Asaba, Gara, Tiv, and many more. The Nupe of Bida total over 20,000; of the strangers, Yoruba with nearly 600 and Hausa with 400–500 constitute the largest contingent in this medley of tribes and races.

And now the town itself. From a broken-off plateau that forms its northern edge, from the foot of two flat-topped hills, the town sweeps down into the plain. The town wall embracing the wide expanse of Bida runs over the edge of the plateau, climbs down into the plain, crosses two rivers and opens its gates upon four roads. This wall was estimated to measure twelve miles in circumference. To-day it has lost its former importance. It has broken down in many places and has been left unrepaired. A go-ahead Administrative Officer some two years ago had ordered all town gates to be pulled down—to make room for the increased motor traffic (which never came). Also, the town no longer fills the space within the wall, and many ruins and deserted places inside the wall betray the changes that have overtaken Bida and its people.

Four big roads lead through Bida, roughly in the shape of a cross, from east to west and north to south. The road from the Kaduna river enters Bida in the west, by the 'Wuya gate', so named after the village on the banks of the Kaduna. Just outside the west gate is 'New Bida'—a nucleus of New Bida—consisting to-day only of a few official buildings, among them the Emir of Bida's newly built residence. We leave New Bida behind, with its brick buildings, its tin roofs, and glass windows, and

[1] Dr. W. B. Baikie, R.N., *J. R. Geogr. Soc.*, 1867, p. 362.

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enter the native town. In the town as it presents itself to the eyes of the visitor there are but few traces of modern influence. There are the modern roads, metalled, with stone parapets and bridges of concrete. But the houses which line the streets are still the same century-old Nupe houses: the big, naked wall enclosing the compound and, hidden behind it, the array of small thatched huts. As in the village, the compound wall opens upon the street in the *katamba*, the gateway or entrance-hall of the Nupe house. Its style and lay-out and the state it is in indicate better than anything else the status and position of the people who live there. There are the round gateways of the wealthy, some painted black, some in gay colours, with ornaments worked in relief into the clay, and the roomy gateways of the royal princes, with window recesses, and pillars and buttresses to support the high-gabled roof. Some *katamba* have raised platforms in front of the door, carefully levelled, and stained with the juice of the locust-bean which gives them the appearance of smooth asphalt. Others have coloured earthenware plates inlaid in the clay of the wall; others show, worked in relief, figures and emblems which took the builder's fancy or which are to indicate the owner's profession, such as the likeness of the wooden writing slate—the 'trade-sign' of the learned Koran-teacher. And then there are the naked, sober *katamba* of the simple craftsman or farmer, and the dilapidated, neglected, and roofless entrance huts of the poor. *Katamba* follows *katamba*, house follows house, as we walk along the road. Side-streets branch off, winding between the compounds, a maze of small streets and paths, which are often just wide enough for a man on horseback to pass through. Here and there the walls recede and give room to an open square with a few trees, a little grass or a patch of cultivated ground, where goats and sheep graze, children play, and a few men, sitting in the shade, enjoy the hours of leisure.

We pass a blacksmiths' quarter, easily known by the open forges with their many doors and small triangular windows all round the walls. A little off the road live weavers and bead-makers. The road opens into a large square. To the right is a market, one of the three big day-markets of Bida, noisy and crowded with people who are buying and selling: foodstuffs, firewood, cloth, small pots. To the left, occupying one whole front of the square, is the residence of the Masaba dynasty. Two small bronze cannons formerly flanked the entrance-hall as symbol of the royal might. In the centre of the square stands a small throne hall; it used to be a pretty building, with painted and decorated pillars all round. But to-day, only a year since the death of the last *Etsu* from this house, it is already in a state of disrepair and neglect which symbolizes, more convincingly even than the disappearance of the bronze cannons, the passing of royal power. Houses of nobility and high office-holders occupy the other sides of the square. Walking on, past the long wall of the royal residence, we come to the street of the brass- and silversmiths. At all hours of the day their forges are busy, but not too busy to greet you with a little flourish of hammering on their anvils. Their womenfolk are sitting outside the huts with baskets full of brass- and silverware in front of them, offering the products of the street to those who pass by.

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361 It is a little over a mile from the west gate to the centre of Bida where the four main roads meet. Here stands another royal residence, the house of *Etsu* Usman Zaki—to-day almost in ruins. But the ruins, the enormous lay-out, the faded paintings and decorations, still speak of the ancient greatness. It is only ten years since the last ruler from this house, *Etsu* Bello, died. But ten years in this country, ten years with no royal household, no army of servants and slaves to take care of upkeep and repair, have sufficed to turn the king's palace into a desolate, half-deserted ruin in a corner of which the king's last descendants find ample room. Behind the house of Usman Zaki is the big town mosque where the Friday services are held, a building of red clay, with a tin roof perched on top, bare and singularly unattractive. In front, and all along the north wall of the royal residence, filling the wide open square, stretches the big 'night-market'—the centre of Bida's pulsating life. It starts in the late afternoon, when peasants return from the farms, craftsmen stop work, and the women leave the houses, dressed for the occasion. Soon the large square is packed with people: men, women, children; townspeople and villagers, buyers and sellers, and those who come to the evening market to watch the crowds, meet friends, or to enjoy the excitement that goes with such public gatherings. The market is easy to survey. Every important commodity has its proper place. Horses and live stock, saddlery and fine coloured grass mats are sold behind the mosque; leather work, caps and straw hats, timber for roofing and coarse mats, in front of *Etsu* Usman's house. The butchers have a hut of their own, and so have the barbers, while traders and brokers who deal in cloth, gowns, ornaments, and swords occupy the long rows of booths which form the one rigid structure in this moving, seething multitude. Women are sitting in long rows all along the street, so close to each other that you can hardly move, selling food, native soap, kola-nuts, ornaments, silver bangles and glassware, beads and European cloth—anything that can be bought and sold in West Africa. Sometimes there are drummers, or a group of girls will sing and dance somewhere in the crowd; the 'young men about town' walk up and down the street, shouting greetings to friends, and joking with girls. When it becomes dark the big trade ends; only the women continue their trade in the light of little clay lamps which they place in front of them—a truly enchanting illumination.

548 But then, in the dark of the night, the market changes its face: the respectable meeting-place of buyers and sellers becomes a market of Venus Pandemos. The women who remain so late are not dressed for work or trade: they wear their most beautiful dresses, light-coloured and embroidered cloth; they have bangles on their wrists and rings on their fingers; their eyes are painted with antimony, and their fingers and hands stained with henna. They never carry loads themselves—they always have a small girl with them to carry their baskets and bundles. They all sell kola-nuts—a man's article. They are always surrounded by men with whom they gossip and joke, and then, a whispered appointment, one of the men leaves, followed after a while by his companion for the night. One light after the other is extinguished. The market grows

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dark and quiet. After 9 o'clock the market-place and the streets are almost deserted.

But let us return to our daylight inspection of the town: we were standing at the crossing of the four main streets of Bida. Turn to the north, and you come to *ldlemi*, the strangers' quarter of Bida, where Hausa and Yoruba are living in houses and huts built in their own tribal style and fashion. They are traders by profession, and shops and stalls line the long road to the north gate—shops in which you can buy everything at every hour of the day, from native food to a European wristwatch, from the powders and amulets of the Hausa medicine-man to brass buttons or bicycle spare parts offered for sale in a Yoruba man's shop. The road to the east bridges a stream and a stretch of marsh-land that runs across the town, with its fields of rice and sugar-cane; it runs past another quarter of brass-smiths, skirts the quarter of the *masagd*, the Bida glass-makers, and leaves the town by the Badeggi gate, so called after a village thirteen miles from Bida on the small rickety railway line (the oldest railway line in Nigeria) which links Baro on the Niger with Minna on the main line of the Nigerian Railway. The south road crosses another stream, with yellowish, dirty water in which children are bathing, grooms watering horses, and women washing their clothes and cleaning pots and pans. It runs on through a thickly populated part of the town, past a beautiful old mosque perched precariously on the edge of a deep trench; another day-market, and another royal residence. Another weavers' quarter, and another group of blacksmiths. Old Bida and New Bida mix for a while: still inside the town walls are Prison and Hospital; on the other side the Native Administration Workshops and the Middle School. And beyond this, the European Reservation, the Government Offices, and then open fields and farms.

This, then, is Bida. Like all large towns it is both more and less than one community. More, in that contacts, communications, and forms of intercourse stretch far beyond the town boundaries; and less, in that within the town walls of Bida there exists a vast number of different, almost independent, strata and 'areas of common life'. Some, perhaps the weakest and least tenacious, are defined by tribal origin. The social differentiation of rich and poor, of social status and political rank, create others—strata in which life is lived in different fashion, in which different values are valid and different patterns of behaviour accepted as normal. But we have also observed the division of the town into three large districts, almost exact copies of each other, each with its day-market, its quarter of craftsmen, and its royal residence. The three districts are separated, geographically, by the two streams which run through Bida, and they are spoken of as three *ekpā*, 'banks', and given the name of the royal house that stands on their ground. Here we deal with units of a different order: they represent political factions, organizations of partisanship and patronage, which cut across the other social, cultural, and tribal strata. They reflect specific political and economic interests, they are vested, ultimately, in that paramount political organization, the state. But that we shall understand more clearly as this description proceeds.

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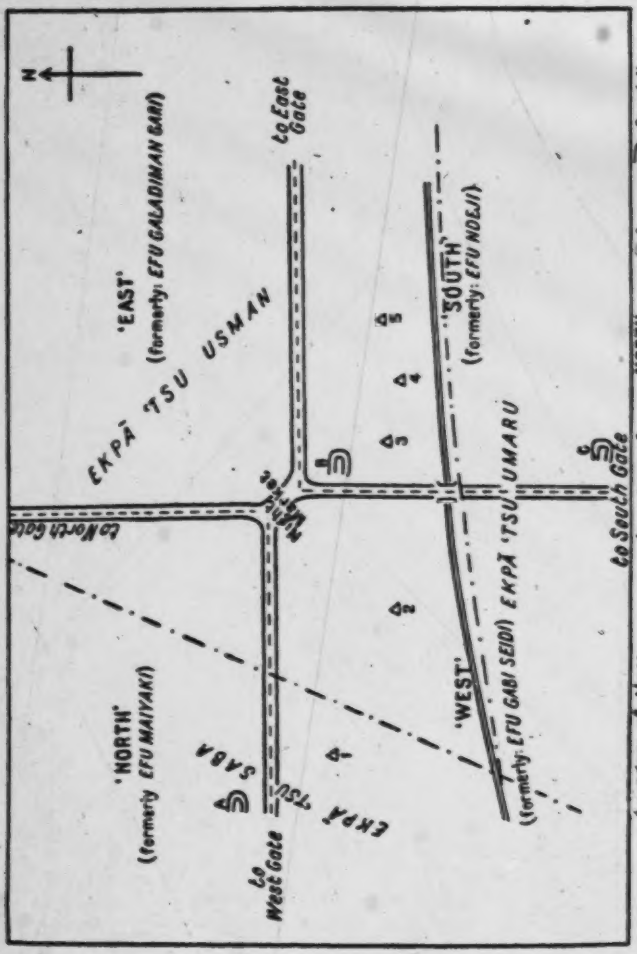

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group or village community), holding 'corporate' rights to land. (2) Acquisition of land in virtue of a contract between individual landowners—a short-term contract such as the 'borrowing' of land, or a long-term, or indefinite, contract such as is embodied in tenantship and in the granting of land for services rendered. The methods summarized under the first category occur both in Trans- and Cis-Kaduna; of the methods summarized under the second category only 'borrowing' occurs in Trans-Kaduna; all acquisition and transfer of land for indefinite periods is restricted to the 'conquered' area east of the Kaduna.

Village Land

The village land is administered, that is, held in trust and apportioned —in Nupe terminology 'owned'—by the chief. Linguistically the specific character of his administrative right to the disposal of village land is not defined very clearly. The Nupe refer to the chief's control over land in exactly the same terms which they use for the direct utilization and ownership of land by a family head or any individual farmer. The Nupe would use the same term also when speaking of the territory belonging to a village, i.e. the land that is 'owned' by the people of the village collectively.[1] Understood in the widest sense of the word, this village land embraces a territory surrounding the village in a rough circle. It comprises three kinds of land, each called by a different name: (1) occupied land fallow or actually worked, in the hands of families or individuals—*latí*, 'farm'; (2) vacant land which has once been occupied but has fallen back to the common fund of land held in trust by the chief for future allotment—mostly referred to as *gonta*; and (3) a fringe of virgin land claimed by the village community as a land reserve—called *cikã*, 'bush', or, again, *gonta*. The second and third kind of land we will call 'village land' in the narrow sense, as against land of the first kind, 'family land'.

The border between the fringe of virgin land which is regarded as the land reserve of the village and the stretch of no-man's-land which separates it from the territory of the next village is fluid and never rigidly defined. There are no marks or boundary signs. But in the sparsely populated area of Trans-Kaduna this never leads to disputes between villages. The fluidity of this boundary is, in fact, an essential part of the elastic system of Nupe settlement, with its star-like expansion and founding of new 'colonies' which, step by step, extend the village territory. The area of village land rarely stretches beyond a radius of three miles: in other words, the Nupe farms are situated within an hour's walk from home. In some cases, where the farms are farther away, the farmers build small grass huts on the farms, in which they can find shelter in a rain or storm or spend the night if it is too late to walk home. Should the people of the village, in their search for new land, go beyond this easy reach, they would found new, permanent settlements, village

[1] The Nupe would say, for example: *Žitsu wũ kin kpdtd*, the chief owns all the land; or *Dokociži wũ kin babó*, the people of Doko own the land round here; but also *Kolo-gá wũ lati-o*, it is Kolo who owns this farm.

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'colonies' or *tunga*. The *tunga* thus possesses land in its own right, but at the same time pushes its territorial possessions further into no-man's-land.

Access to Village Land

There is no general rule for the distribution, within the area of village land, of the farms belonging to the various family groups and individuals. Roughly one may say that the small individual plots (called *bucá*—a term to be explained presently) are situated near the village and the larger family plots (*efakó* plots) farther afield. When old men own plots of their own they, too, are given plots near the village so that they should not have to walk too far. The different plots which belong to the group of people living together in the same house (as a rule, a single family group), whether the plots are worked jointly or independently by the various household members, do not necessarily lie together, but are frequently scattered. Nor have the people who live together in the same *efu* their land on adjoining sites, or in the neighbourhood of the part of the village where they live. We may add that, again, there exist no special signs or boundary marks to distinguish the property of different farmers. A narrow path, a border of shrubs, or a tree, serve as landmark.[1] But the different cultivation that may be practised on the different fields, or the different stage of cultivation which the different fields may represent (fallow land, land that has been worked for one year, or two years, &c.), maké these boundaries more obvious to the eye.

This irregular distribution of farm-plots appears to be due to a variety of causes. To some extent it is entailed in the complex agricultural technique of the country, with its many different types of cultivation and its regular system of rotation of crops. Every farmer owns a certain number of fields—some under cultivation while others are lying fallow—which he tries to distribute over different sites so that he can utilize different types of soil, e.g. the marshy sites near watercourses for the cultivation of rice or sweet potatoes, dry sandy soil for ground-nuts, heavier soil for yam and cotton, and so forth. This arrangement also has the advantage of distributing more evenly the risks of failure. You often find farmers complaining that one site on which they have a farm is less good than another, or has perhaps suffered special injury that year through birds or through thieving baboons, or has been washed away by a flooded river. But the irregular distribution of farm-plots is also a result of the very method of Nupe settlement: it could not be otherwise with the farm-land lying in a circle round the large villages in which a numerous population is concentrated. There would not be room enough for all family groups in the village to have their lands arranged in compact blocks in equally favoured positions, both with regard to the distance from the village and to the quality of the soil. Moreover, some plots more heavily worked than others 'tire' sooner and must be replaced by virgin land lying farther afield; and growing families must provide more land for their

[1] A characteristic exception are a few marsh-land plots near Kacha, which are properly fenced in—'because of the many disputes' that arise over this kind of land.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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Mohamadu before him, whose royal residence was not far from the brass-smiths' quarter. Here, as in many other instances, the invaluable royal patronage was extended primarily to the craftsmen living in the part of the town traditionally associated with the dynasty. With the change of the dynasty the royal patronage changed also, and under the late *Etsu* Saidu, of the house of Masaba, the brass-smiths in the Masaba quarter captured the largest and most lucrative trade. A contributory cause lies in the lay-out of modern Bida. The motor-road to the centre of Bida and the big market leads through the street of the brass-smiths in the Masaba quarter, while the other brass-smiths' group is situated in an obscure corner of Bida, away from roads and markets. Now, the brass- and silver-ware manufactured in Bida consists to a large extent of ornaments for men and women and other 'luxury' objects. A large proportion is intended for export, and certain goods are even made specially for tourists and European 'curio'-hunters. In either case the nearness of the big trading centre and the main thoroughfare of the town, with its opportunity for display and for attracting customers, must prove an advantage which is denied to the other, almost inaccessible, group of craftsmen.

The character of this luxury industry also explains its concentration in Bida. Its products find their way to villages and peasant districts as well. But a constant and large-scale demand exists only in the capital. Moreover, the concentration of this industry is, in sophisticated Nupe, a trade-mark of refinement and value, and a guarantee that its products express the latest fashions.

The technical equipment of the workshop of the brass-smiths differs in certain important details from that of the blacksmiths. The workshops of the brass-smiths, with their smaller and less smoky furnace, are more often housed in the compound itself, i.e. in the entrance hut. The tools are less heavy and adjusted to the finer technique. European hammers, chisels, and files are used to a much larger extent. The main products of the Nupe brass industry are sword-hilts and daggers,[1] horse-trappings, bowls, jugs, trays, ladles, and receptacles of various kinds, made mostly of beaten brass or copper; bangles and rings, which are cast in open clay moulds of bars of brass or silver or (nowadays) aluminium and then bent and twisted into shape; also hairpins and silver chains. Artistic decoration, especially ornamentation of the surface of these various objects, plays an important part. From old Nupe brass- and silver-work preserved in Bida and in European museums we learn the different styles in decoration which have succeeded each other in the course of the last hundred years. The style in fashion to-day is ornamentation in *pointillé* technique.[2]

The Nupe brass-smiths also practise soldering with tin, and one or

[1] The blades are old, mostly of German or Austrian manufacture, and have been traded for centuries to Nigeria and Nupe, across the desert, from North Africa.

[2] The oldest style appears to be a fluted design which I have seen on certain brass bowls; a later style which flourished at the end of last century, consisted in embossed ornaments which made special use of the flower motif. The *pointillé* style appears to have come in about 1910.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942

FF52 Nupe FF52

TRIBAL MAP OF

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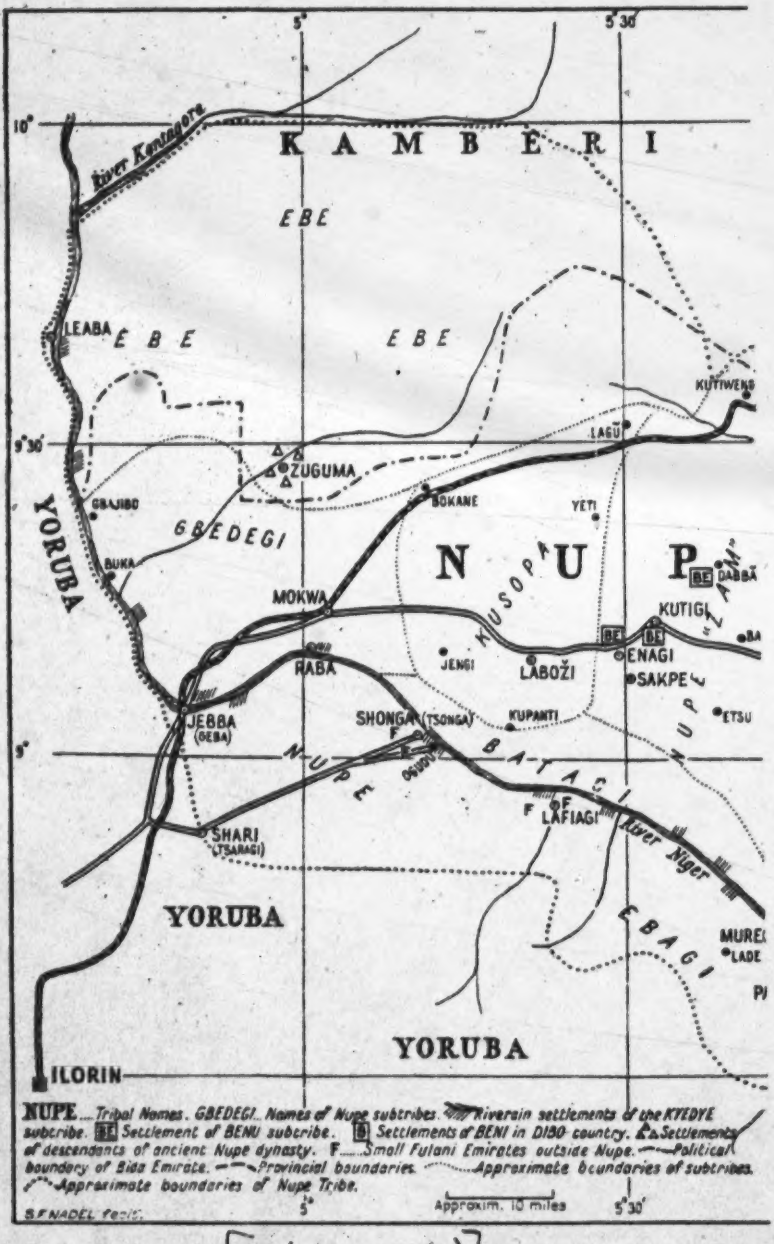

[End Map I (A)]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

MAP OF NUPE

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[End Map I (B)]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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BIDA CITY

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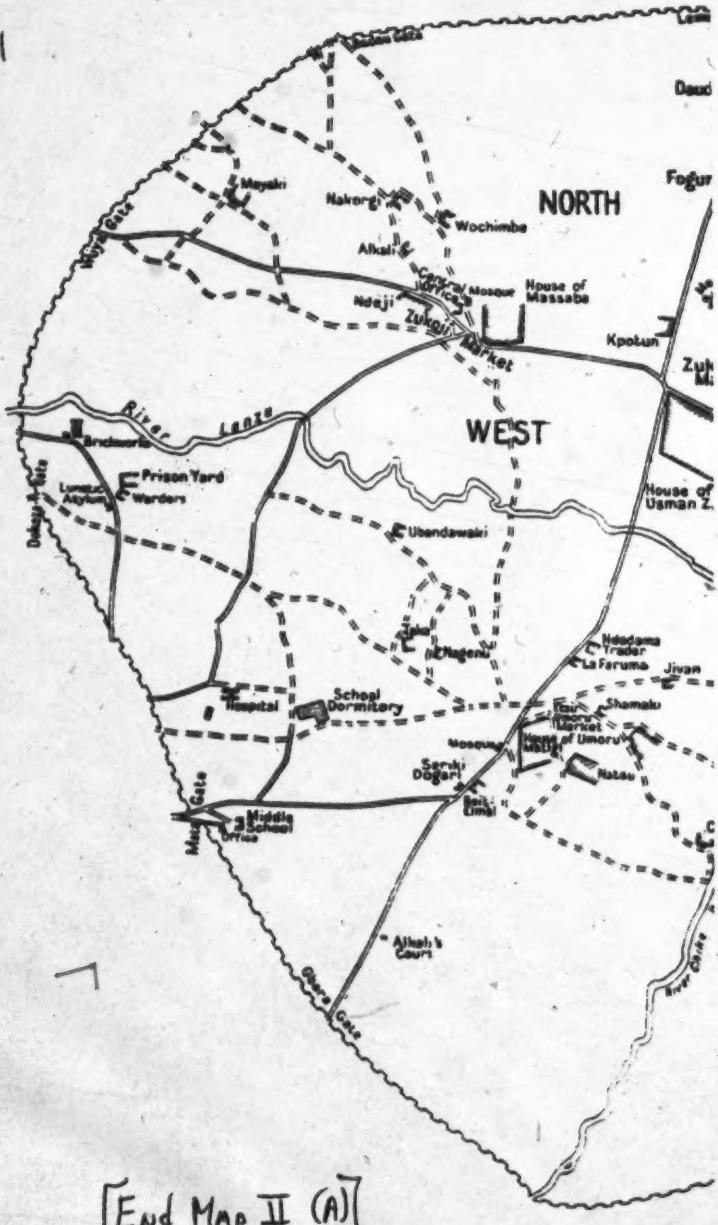

[End Map II (A)]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

BIDA CITY

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[End Map II (B)]

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

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[p. 70(a)]

[847]

10. The *zumácikà* medicine shrine in Jebba

11. Dressing the *mamma* masks

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Local and Kinship Grouping

Descent and succession to offices and the inheritance of rights to land and other property are normally patrilineal among all Nupe. At the same time kin ties traced through the mother may afford opportunities for advancement and, especially in Bida the capital, maternal connections with persons of rank may be used to advantage in the political sphere. The Nupe term *dengi* connotes kinship in the widest sense to include all recognized cognates, but the effective *dengi* of an individual consists mainly of his agnates or patrilineal relatives descended from a common ancestor several generations back. Maternal kin ties, on the other hand, are rarely traced or effective beyond one or two generations. Groups of male patrikin are significant both as the nuclei of residential groups in extended families and in the status system of the chiefdom.

The domestic unit is usually an elementary or polygynous family, i.e., a man, his wife or wives, and unmarried children.[1] This, or a larger group consisting of a man, his wives, married sons, their wives and children, or of a set of brothers, their wives, children, and grandchildren, the nucleus of which is thus a patrilineage of small span, inhabits a division of the compound, keeps house and eats in common, and forms a single productive or labour unit. No special name exists for this group apart from that referring to its organization as a labour unit or *efakó*. The larger unit was formerly general, but under modern conditions the family has tended to divide when sons become adult. The domestic family normally forms part of a larger social unit, the "house" (*emi*), which is both a kinship and a territorial group and may also be referred to as a *katamba*, a term for the common gateway or entrance to an enclosed compound. An *emi* may be localized in one compound or may be distributed over a number of adjacent compounds, occupying either the whole or part of a ward (*efu*). In Bida the *emi* tends to be more widely scattered. The nucleus of an *emi* again consists of a body of patrikin to which wives and others are attached. Its head is known as the *emitsó* ("owner of the house"), a position which falls to the senior male member of the group, who is succeeded by the next in seniority of the same generation, and so on. When a section of an *emi* separates physically it continues to recognize its former head while he lives, but on his death it often attains an independent position with its own head. The size of the *emi* varies considerably. In Bida, those of commoners are often small and may contain no more than six or eight individuals; in the smaller settlements and among the nobility they may include as many as 60 persons.

Beyond these groups the Nupe also often recognize kinship over a still wider field. Thus a whole village may be regarded as descended from one ancestor, but such essentially mythical kinship links do not involve any specific kinship claims and obligations.

The three royal houses of Nupe may be regarded as large lineages or "clans," for they claim to observe rigid patrilineal descent believed to have proceeded from sanctified "first ancestors."

Forms of Settlement: House Types[2]

Nupe live in compact villages or towns (*esi* is the term for both) which vary considerably in size; in Bida Emirate, besides the capital, there are three considerable settlements: Doko (800), Mokwa (2,000), Kutigi (3,000). Some, on the other

[1] Nadel, 1942, pp. 25–33.

[2] Nadel, 1942, pp. 24, 27–33, 34, 38– , 226–7; 1938; Temple, 1919, p. 334; Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. Harris.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

hand, are hardly larger than a *tunga* (see below). An *ezi* used to be encircled by a large wall, the ruins of which can still be seen in many places, which formed a protection from the dangers of war. Some Nupe villages of to-day have sprung from the amalgamation of smaller groups, fusing for purposes of protection against Fulani raiders.

To-day there is at least one small mosque in every Nupe settlement except in the riverain villages, while pagan shrines are concealed in the houses. All settlements have good wells and round roasting-ovens of red clay. A square of open booths forms the market. To the west of every village is an open space (*finzo*) where corn is threshed.

An *ezi* usually has several *tunga* settlements or hamlets; Kutigi, for example, has six, founded between 1860 and 1910. The *tunga* are much smaller " daughter settlements " or " colonies " of the *ezi*. They seldom consist of more than three family groups (*emi*—see p. 31 above); they are less permanent than the " real " village, and lack the religious and ancestral bonds which tie a village to its locality. They have no separate markets or age-sets. *Tunga* settlements have been formed by groups moving out into the bush in search of new farmland; they are always referred to as the *tunga* of a certain *ezi* and rarely, if ever, develop into villages themselves. Close contact, intermarriage, and new emigration link a *tunga* with its *ezi*.

The ward (*efu*) is a sector of a large village or town and is made up of a number of compounds; except in some riverside villages they are often separated from each other by stretches of open land or cultivated fields studded with clumps of trees. Each *efu* has its own name, derived from a topographical peculiarity or a sociological feature, or from the origin of the inhabitants. The number of *efu* in an *ezi* varies; the old city of Bida had four, Doko has five.

The walled compound or " house " (*emi*), already mentioned with reference to its occupants, consists of a number of huts, mostly round, with very thin walls of clay and grass-thatched roofs. The high mud wall surrounding the *emi* opens upon a path or open space where there is a gateway or entrance hall to the compound, consisting of a larger hut known as *katamba*. The *katamba* is used as a meeting place for the men, as a guest house for strangers, or for the carrying out of part-time industries such as mat- or net-making. Within the *emi* are smaller partitions and a number of smaller *katamba* invisible from the outside. A chief sometimes has a larger and more imposing *katamba* with a high gabled roof and windows. Huts and entrance hall are often decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. Signs of occupational specialization, such as a blacksmith's furnace, are sometimes found. A man and each of his wives has a separate hut.

Granaries (*edo*) which stand among the living-huts in the compound, are egg-shaped, raised off the ground, about 7 ft. high and 4 ft. in diameter, with thick clay walls and a grass roof. The opening is about halfway up one side and has a clay lid. There are also cylindrical ovens, 5 ft. high and 3 ft. wide, for drying bulrush millet and shea-nuts, and for making soap, outside the compound. These are communal property, owned by the women.

The Political System[3]

The political organization of the Nupe is centralized under the *Etsu* Nupe, who is the highest title-holder in a nobility graded by precedence but within which there is provision for promotion. Little is known of the system of kingship in pre-Fulani times, though some features from the ancient Nupe system doubtless survive in the original Nupe dynasty at Patigi. In former times there were ritual taboos in conformity with which the *Etsu* wore only white, ate food prepared only by his wives, and might not be seen eating by any stranger. The *ndakó gboyá* cult[4] for

[3] Nadel, 1942, pp. 87–91.
[4] See below, pp. 48–9.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922
FF52 Nupe FF52

sons, his whole brothers, and his daughters in a fixed and decreasing proportion. If the children are infants the money is held in trust for them by the brothers of the deceased. A woman's money is inherited in the same way, but either sex may leave their money as they choose, by declaring their wishes in the presence of a large number of responsible witnesses. If there is no family, a woman may inherit from her husband, and in some cases where there are no children, and she is known to have been a specially good wife, the brothers of the deceased forego their right in her favour. If she has no children her property goes to her husband. In no case does an illegitimate child inherit.

In old times the people did not dare live outside walled villages, but the neighbouring lands were apportioned by the village-head amongst the various heads of families, according to the amount he and his could beneficially occupy. The family-head in his turn granted the right of occupancy to individuals of his family, and, as no tree was of value before the virgin forest was cleared, each occupant had also the right to the sylvan produce of his land. As, however, virgin forest diminished and land became less plentiful, the heads reserved the use of the oil-palm to themselves, though at one time they held it in trust for the Emir.

Land cannot be sold, but it may be redistributed either on the migration of the holder, or on the extinction of the whole family. The village-head has a right to ask the family-head to give him back some land that he may grant it to a new comer, always supposing that this land is not at the time fully occupied. The right of occupancy passes on the death of the holder to the successive head of the family.

Amongst the pagan Nupe* the guardian spirit "Gunu" is worshipped. Sheep, dogs and fowls are sacrificed in his honour, their blood being poured out as a libation to him, whilst their flesh is consumed by the worshippers. Every eleven months the men go to his altar, beneath which sacred relics have been buried since time immemorial, where they kneel down in a wide circle, joining hands, and bowing their foreheads to the ground. The Elders address the spirit, and a feast and special dance follows. Other festivals are held at harvest time, and on the appointment of a new head-man, each village head-man being also village priest. There is a semi-religious institution called "Ndakogboiya." A meeting is held at the Chief's house, when a man may complain of his wife's conduct and beg that she may be taken to task, together with any other ill-doer. A man then mounts on stilts, and appears amongst the people after dark, proclaiming their evil deeds, and receiving propitiatory

* Sapke and Mokwa.

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
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Kede

trading goods, or till they have found another 'passenger' (in native phraseology) to engage them for a profitable return journey.

Here we grasp the significance of this productive system for the organization of settlement in Kede country. The long canoe expeditions necessitate fixed stopping and resting places, where the canoemen must be sure to find shelter and food and opportunity to refit their craft. The 'termini' of their river routes more specially will tend to become at least seasonal 'colonies' of Kede. The stopping and waiting places will naturally be chosen in accordance with commercial considerations. And, finally, there must be some system of political protection, which could ensure the safety (speaking of pre-British times) of these far-flung routes, the stopping places with their valuable stores, and the seasonal or permanent trading posts:[1] trading posts which, of necessity, tend to become political colonies—this gives us the formula of Kede settlement.

IV. Settlement

We are fortunate in possessing data which allow us to trace in detail the history of settlement and population movement in Kede country. Our data are derived only partly from oral tradition. The history of Kede settlement reaches into the well-documented era of Nigerian exploration and British occupation; its last phases are happening under our very eyes. In addition to these historical records, we possess evidence of a different kind, which, indirectly, contributes considerably to our understanding of population movement in Kede country: it lies, as we shall see, in the lay-out and organization of the present-day Kede settlements themselves.

According to Kede tradition, their tribal home was near the confluence of Niger and Kaduna, near Muregi, which, some time later, became their political capital. From there they are said to have extended their settlements, and rule at the same time, gradually over the river banks towards the north and the south

[1] A case in point is the uninhabited right bank of the Niger above Jebba, where constant raids by inland tribes (from Borgu) made settlement impossible. The left bank, on the other hand, could be adequately protected, and here the Kede established a settlement at Buka (it was later moved to Jebba). In the south, Kede canoes did not travel beyond Eggan in pre-British days. The river south of Eggan was the domain of the Kakanda, a warlike riverain tribe of non-Nupe stock, which refused Kede canoes admittance into their area. Trade goods for the south had to be trans-shipped at Eggan to Kakanda canoes.

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
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Kede

till their villages covered the Niger Valley between Eggan and Jebba. At the time when the first European travellers appeared in Nupe country, we find the Kede already firmly entrenched in this part of the Niger Valley. Now, of the ten main villages of the Kede which exist to-day only one represents an independent, purely Kede settlement—the Kede capital, Muregi. It is a well-built village, with solid houses of sun-dried mud bricks, each compound walled in in Nupe fashion, with a big mosque and an imposing chief's house. It is, as I have said, a pure Kede town, a town inhabited entirely by the 'ruling race'—'*u de talakazi a*', say the Kede ('it contains no poor'—meaning persons belonging to the subject groups). All other Kede settlements, without exception, are built on or near the site of a village of 'original inhabitants'. In most cases the Kede settlement occupies the river bank itself, and the 'native' village the stretch of country immediately behind; in a few cases we find the Kede settlements on an island off the bank occupied by the 'native' village or on the opposite side of the river. The result is something like a twin-village, half 'native' and half Kede. The scene of Kede tradition, a tribal home and emigrant settlements, seems indeed visible in the present-day organization of Kede settlement, with its one all-Kede town and its many 'twin-villages' along the river valley.

The more recent history of Kede settlement remains true to this picture of a gradual territorial expansion. We know that towards the end of last century the Kede settled for the first time on the Kaduna River. Later, under the Royal Niger Company, the Kede were encouraged to extend their settlements still farther on Niger and Kaduna. It is easy to trace these new settlements, which were founded near the European trading posts and other places which had similarly gained commercial importance. Only some thirty years ago the Kede founded their latest 'colony'—on Jebba Island.

The villages differ greatly in appearance: some villages boast solidly built permanent houses, while others consist largely of more flimsy buildings, grass-walled huts, suggestive of temporary occupation rather than permanent settlements. The habitations of the Kede reflect the flexible, mobile nature of their system of settlement. The degree of permanence attempted in the buildings at the same time betrays the age of the settlement as well as its (past or present) importance as an economic or

5: Nadel \E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

361 political centre. The Kede settlement at Raba is a typical instance
184 of the more solidly built settlement. It was founded about 1840, when Raba was the capital of Nupe Emirate. The first settlers were five men with their families from Muregi, who belonged to one 'house'; to-day the Kede colony at Raba (which now also possesses a Niger Company storehouse) numbers seven 'houses'.

The Kede settlement at Katcha is an example of the other, poorly built, type, which gives the impression as if the settlers had not yet found time, or had not yet quite decided, to build themselves permanent quarters. The present Kede settlement dates back to 1905–10, at which time a group of Kede who had settled previously at Eggan, on the main river, abandoned this colony for Katcha, attracted by the opportunities of the place. Katcha, on a tributary of the Niger, owed its rise to importance to the introduction of steamer traffic on the Niger and the building of the first Nigerian railway from Baro, through Katcha, to Minna. Its five or six 'houses' of original Kede settlers have now increased to seventeen.

Our list of Kede settlements would not be complete without the mention of the purely temporary riverside camps, meant to last for one season or a few weeks only, which the Kede put up in the larger villages where they are wont to stop on their journeys up and down the river. During the main trading season, Jebba, Patigi, Wuya, or Katcha are crowded with these lightly built shelters, grass-huts, tent-like structures of grass-matting or —crudest of all—the wattle-and-matting awnings of the canoes simply pulled ashore. Kede settlement has not yet come to a standstill. Places which are gaining in importance still attract new groups of immigrants; and the seasonal shelters in a busy trading centre may at any time be turned into permanent quarters, as, indeed, it has happened repeatedly in the course of time.

361 Reviewing the history of Kede settlement, we find its depen-
166 dence on economic factors fully confirmed. We may conceive of it as of a progressive realization of the dictates of the productive system of the country. The Kede, as we have seen, did not occupy new, uninhabited country, but settled in places where an existing population had already established a certain level of social and economic life. In the choice of places for settlement and in their subsequent development, the Kede were invariably guided by commercial considerations. They were, moreover, not satisfied

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

with the position of immigrants who are dependent on the good-will of their hosts, but claimed with the territory in which to settle also the political rule over it. If they are thus not 'colonists' in the strict sense of the word, not caring for settlement in new, virgin country, they are 'colonizers' in a more special, political sense, being settlers, immigrants, and representatives of a ruling race in one.

Here a final point remains to be cleared up: the exact relation between the elastic territorial expansion of the tribe and the necessarily more inert and rigid expansion of political domination. From the history of modern Kede settlement we learn that there is a certain time lag between the first occupation of a new place by Kede immigrants (the nucleus stage of the seasonal camp) and its eventual rise to the status of a political outpost. The Kede, as a rule, attribute the founding of their various colonies to particular chiefs. The initiative taken by the Kede chief in the colonial enterprise refers both to the early growth and the final political incorporation of the new colony. He might himself send out settlers from Muregi to a new place which looked a likely centre for Kede activities (Raba is an instance of this), or he might direct settlers from other places to a promising new settlement (as was the case in Katcha). But not until a settlement was firmly established and numbered several families would he delegate an official representative of his to take charge of it, thus proclaiming the political incorporation of the new Kede dominion.

We learn, further, that Kede territorial expansion did not proceed step by step, in continuous stages, but rather in a series of leaps, which may leave gaps between outpost and outpost, or mother-country and new settlement. Thus there are 'uncolonized' spaces on the Kaduna River between Gbara and Wuya or Gbara and Muregi—that is, stretches of country with native villages which (unlike the interspersed *kintsozi* villages in the 'old' Kede country) have not been absorbed politically by the Kede. We may assume that the early growth of the Kede community followed the same line of development. If this was so, the compact political unit in the 'old' Kede country proves that political rule was later brought up to the new outpost, and the territorial gaps eventually absorbed in the extending political unit. To-day the firmly fixed boundaries of provinces and districts forbid, of course, a similar sequel to the founding of new settlements. The new economic

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
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361 development of the country, moreover, has attracted Kede
166 emigration to places far outside the orbit of their political organiza-
634 tion: thus at the busy trading-place on the confluence of Niger and Benue, Lokoja, a large and prosperous Kede colony has grown, which combines all the 'stages' of Kede settlement, permanent and semi-permanent houses in which Kede families have made their home as well as a large encampment on the river bank for the Kede canoemen from the north. But it seems that even in pre-British times the territorial expansion of the Kede had to leave certain 'gaps' in its network of settlements and political outposts. Thus the large Nupe town of Eggan on the right bank of the Niger, flanked to the north and south by (presumably old) Kede settlements, remained a powerful, independent political unit, placed directly under the King of Nupe. It is this characteristic scheme of Kede expansion which allows for territorial gaps and the founding of (at least temporarily) isolated outposts that justifies our speaking of Kede 'colonies' and 'colonization'.

V. Political Organization

634 The political system of the Kede corresponds in all important points to the concept of the State. On its small scale, it fulfils the essential conditions of State organization: its dominion is territorial and non-tribal (or inter-tribal); its administration is centralized; its machinery of government is monopolized by a special *ad hoc* appointed or selected body, which is separated from the rest of the population by certain social and economic privileges.[1] The first of these three features we have discussed already; as regards the second, we have learned that Muregi, the traditional home of the tribe, is at the same time the political centre of the country; and as regards the last point, we have seen that in a broad sense the Kede themselves represent, corporatively, the ruling group of the country. But among the Kede we find another, more precisely defined 'privileged group', in whose hands the government of the country is concentrated. This ruling group, in a narrow sense, consists of the Kede chief and his titled councillors and emissaries.

[1] With regard to this definition of the State, see *Africa*, vol. cit., and my forthcoming Nupe book. R. Lowie, *The Origin of the State* (1927) (chaps. iii and iv), recognizes territorial sovereignty and centralized authority as essential to the structure of the State; the factor of the special 'ruling group' has been elaborated by F. Oppenheimer, *The State* (1926).

9: Nadel E-5 (1934-1935) 1935 FF52 Nupe FF52

sphere of influence of the *ledu*-organization, death penalty was executed, though in secrecy, by the people of the village themselves. But however this be, the actual issue is little affected. For even if there had existed this strong superstitious belief, the problem for us here is that it should be made use of in such a special way. The belief, the sentiments expressed in the belief, and the political institution in which they crystallise, are two entirely different things. The political system of Nupe kingdom, creating the *ledu*-organization, might actually only have adopted existing motives and ideas; but then it lent its own most sacred symbolism to their support, and at the same time formed out of their psychological appeal a rigid judicial monopoly, and a political office which almost comes to deny its origin: for the office of the *ledu* includes as we have seen also cases which have nothing more to do with death, namely the flogging of those who abused the name of the king; and ordinary flogging was done in every Nupe village.

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III.

More than a hundred years of Mohammedan law, decades of civil war and political changes, were not powerful enough to break the spiritual influence of the *ledu* institution, the belief in its ordeals, and the sacredness of its office. But they have been able to obliterate certain details of its organization. One point in particular it is difficult to ascertain to-day: who was actually entitled to make use of the organization of 'Tsoede's hangmen'?

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I found two different, and conflicting, interpretations. According to the first, the power of the *ledu* was limited to the river, and the authority over the *ledu* was, from Tsoede's time almost up till now, given into the hands of the chief of one section among the Nupe, the Kyedya. The people who call themselves Kyedya are the most powerful among the riverain Nupe. They are the canoe- and fishermen on the main river; they monopolize river traffic and trade, they look down upon their neighbours, and style themselves the 'Lords of the Waters.' They are united in a very strongly centralized political organization, and their head is the chief of Muregi, who holds the ancient hereditary title of *kuta*. The *kuta*, then, is said to be the legitimate head of the ledu organization. But a second version says that the office of the *ledu* comprised the whole country (or at least stretched inland as well), and that the power over the *ledu* belonged exclusively to the *etsu*, or kings, of the Nupe —the kings who were till the Fulani conquest the direct descendants of Tsoede.

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Weighing evidence against evidence, the situation seems to be this:—Originally an organization of the Nupe king the *ledu* system was adopted later by the Kyedya. In the beginning the Nupe king alone was entitled to act through the *ledu* organization. Geographical and historical facts, reflected in the mythology of their ancestor-king, account for the connection with the river area: the territory of the young Nupe kingdom were the river banks. The river Niger, *ndádzwa*, as the Nupe call it, 'Father Niger,' marks the path of the mythical Tsoede where he set out to unite the Nupe into a powerful kingdom. Even later, in historical times, when the Nupe state extended far across central Nigeria, the capitals always remained near the river: Gbara, Jima, Mokwa and Raba.[4] But also economically the Niger was the life centre of the country. The welfare of a large section of the population depended on the river. And traffic and trade, so immensely important in Nupe culture, were bound up with the Niger. What appears, then, in the context of myth as the path of the ancestor-king of Nupe, plays in the actual tribal life the rôle of a 'King's Highway,' of a vital artery of the political and economic organism over which the king extends his own special, sacred authority. Violation of the law in this area means the violation of this sacredness; and crimes committed here became crimes of a special sort, subject to a special jurisdiction which has the meaning more of a sacred vengeance than of an ordinary punishment.

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When, however, during the Fulani wars the political centre moved away from the river, finally to Bida, the present capital of Nupe, the original organization of the *ledu* must have lost force and significance. And then it was, as our evidence points out, that the Kyedya claimed the title over the *ledu*. The power over the river was now theirs, unquestioned. The Kyedya, hostile to the Fulani invaders, always boasting with their ancient lordship over the waters, and regarding themselves still in the days of British rule as equal to the king of Bida, seized this organization which seemed a

[4] *See* the map in my article on *Nupe State and Community* (AFRICA, VIII, 3).